

February 21, 2016

Appropriations Committee
Connecticut State Legislature

Written Testimony

The state of Connecticut will be making conscious decision to devalue the quality of life for every citizen if the proposed budget cuts are allowed to be made. Small or rural libraries like the Babcock Library in Ashford depend on borrowIT and many other State Library programs to operate our most basic programs like book clubs. Since I joined the Babcock at the beginning of January, all 4 of our book clubs have been pushed back or cancelled because our patrons did not receive their copies in time. I have had to contact Walt, the program supervisor, multiple times to receive our first shipment in over a month, and when it arrived it contained books that were long overdue to their home libraries and items our patrons had given up on receiving. You may not be aware of this because you do not need to hear the patrons lament the lack of books and then begin to point fingers at staff and demand disciplinary actions. While many understand once I explain the situation, it only makes it look more and more like Governor Malloy and those in the State House do not care about the citizens. Also, the elimination of borrowIT means many of our clubs and groups would no longer be able to meet. Sadly this would mean that two positions, responsible for these activities, would be let go and join the unemployed. All to save less than \$200,000 that has a return value of over \$7,000,000.

Ashford also has several families that home school their children. These families rely on the Babcock Library to be able to teach their children with the most recent and factual resources available. These cover a variety of topics, specific for each age level, and with the sciences are updated frequently. We cannot purchase all that they require and the borrowIT program allows us to satisfy our patron's needs and the mission of any library – to share information. When the free flow of information is restricted, the truth no longer becomes important and people begin to believe the lies they are told. Informed citizens make democracy possible and successful; uninformed or misinformed citizens allow tyrants to take control.

To put the elimination of borrowIT, and other State library programs, into monetary numbers I will use as an example the CLC Audio/DVD swap that I most recently participated. Nearly twenty libraries in the eastern part of Connecticut are able to bring their patrons new DVDs and Audio (books and musical CDs) every three months by swapping between the individual libraries in the state. Each swap brings 30-40 new items to each institution. For audiobooks, which is 90% of these swaps, that means every quarter we receive from \$1200-1500 in new items for just belonging to the CLC, which receives considerable funding from the programs you plan to eliminate. By cutting this small bit of funding, when compared to the entire budget, you will be robbing approximately \$5,000 worth of new items from my patrons – and that is just in audiobooks. For physical books, which we rely on borrowIT for, we have saved our library nearly \$10,000 in book purchases and have assisted other libraries in saving similar amounts and more.

I hope that the testimony of myself, patrons, and colleagues convince the Legislature to not cut funding or eliminate from the statutes the borrowIT service, and other library programs funded by the State.

Sincerely,

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